

This special threat advisory is intended to provide situational awareness of threats to public order, public safety, and the security of public officials arising from violent online rhetoric opposing new and ongoing public health restrictions (Information current as of 03 February 2022, 1000hrs). The IMCIT continues to maintain visibility on emerging threats and will provide updates as required.

SPECIAL THREAT ADVISORY – UPDATE 5

FREEDOM CONVOY 2022: ONGOING IN OTTAWA SINCE JANUARY 28/29, 2022

KEY POINTS

- Disruptions that include 481 personal and commercial motor vehicles continue to impact daily life in Ottawa as part of the ongoing Freedom Convoy 2022 demonstration. Numbers of individuals arriving and departing the National Capital Region (NCR) remain fluid and will likely increase over the weekend (February 5 and 6). While the duration of the event in Ottawa remains unknown, the presence of counter-protesters has a potential to escalate tensions and lead to altercations.
- Solidarity actions have been identified in every province and at least one territory, and enforcement at any one event will likely be perceived negatively and may spark more solidarity activities or adverse behavior in other parts of the country. The perceived knowledge of solidarity actions globally may also energize ongoing protests throughout Canada.
- No formal organized plot of violence has been identified. The use of convoys as a protest tactic is trending nationally and poses multiple issues to public and officer safety. In addition, factors such as the circulation of misinformation, discussions about military enforcement, exhaustion, substance abuse, altercations amongst counter-protesters and with law enforcement and the influence of ideologically motivated actors or charismatic speakers may impact the temperature of the crowd. The potential for serious violence by a lone actor or fringe group cannot be discounted. As with all large public order events, these factors may have the potential to galvanize larger portions of the protesters to violence.

CURRENT STATUS

Public order activities associated to the Freedom Convoy 2022 continue. The protest local to the National Capital Region (NCR), as well as public order events nationally, continue to gain widespread media coverage and social media momentum internationally. This Strategic Threat Assessment identifies the potential implications of these events local to Ottawa, as well as nationally and globally.

Page 1 of 7

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Royal Canadian Mounted Police
Gendarmerie royale du Canada

Canada

NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION

SCOPE AND SCALE

A mix of 481 personal and commercial motor vehicles continue to disrupt downtown Ottawa as part of the ongoing Freedom Convoy 2022 protest.¹ Media reports indicate that Ottawa Police estimated 8,000 to 15,000 people were in attendance during the peak of the protest over the past weekend.² Numbers of individuals arriving and departing the NCR remain fluid and will likely fluctuate daily as the demonstration continues, with an influx of protesters expected this upcoming weekend. Information from the RCMP Protective Intelligence Unit indicates that the City of Ottawa received a permit for a February 5 counter-protest in opposition of the convoy with 1,000 participants expected by the organizer.³ While the exact number of counter-protesters cannot be confirmed, it adds to the fluidity of protester numbers within the impacted area at any given time.

Open source observations and information from law enforcement partners indicate that February 5 and 6 will draw more protesters in support of the convoy to the NCR. Chatter this week has also suggested the intention for some individuals who were present last weekend to return, as well as others to join, including convoys from Quebec⁴ and supporters local to Ottawa.⁵ Advertisements for a convoy to Toronto on February 5 have also been circulating convoy and anti-public health order social media,⁶ which may divert some Ontario attendance away from Ottawa and to Toronto for a period of time.

INTENT WHILE IN OTTAWA

A “Freedom Dance Party Part II” has been advertised on social media to take place on February 5 from 1200hrs to 1500hrs at Parliament Hill.⁷ Other than this event, very little information regarding planned activities has been observed, which presents challenges for estimating numbers and crowd behaviour. With limited event organization, impromptu protests will continue to occur with little or no social media advertising beforehand due to the ability to mobilize a large group of people on short notice.

Based on open source information, two individuals with significant social media followings will be in Ottawa. The self-proclaimed **Personal Info.** inspired by QAnon ideologies, arrived in Ottawa on February 3 and requested 100-500 volunteers to gather at Parliament Hill for her arrival.⁸ Another anti-public health order influencer posted that he arrived in Ottawa on February 3. This individual has engaged in activities in the past which included disrupting businesses by defying public health orders, as well as organizing nation-wide convoys at airports in opposition to mandatory vaccines for air travel.⁹ The presence of these individuals may attract ideologically motivated personalities to the area.

The primary messaging within anti-public health order networks related to the convoy indicates an intention for some individuals to stay until vaccine mandates for truckers are lifted, with overarching narratives indicating a desire for all public health restrictions to be lifted. There is a perception that ongoing acts of civil disobedience gridlocking local traffic in Ottawa will pressure the government to lift all mandates.

Page 2 of 7

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FUNDRAISING EFFORTS

After exceeding \$10 million, the fundraiser associated with the convoy was paused pending a review to ensure it complies with the terms of service, laws and regulations of GoFundMe.¹⁰ There is no information on what will be done with the funds or if GoFundMe ever released additional funds to the organizer.^a Although the purpose of the fundraiser was to support the convoy, which no doubt contributed to the momentum in chatter related to the protest, prior to the pause by GoFundMe, there has been little indication that the funds are being dispersed to those currently occupying space in Ottawa. In addition, multiple other small scale fundraisers and direct donations have been observed, however, the means by which this money is being distributed remains unknown. As a result, it is unlikely the fundraising efforts are solely motivating the ongoing situation.

GENERAL THREATS

No formal organized plot of violence has been identified, however, there are a number of dynamic factors which could impact the situation as the protest continues, including the number of people in the crowd, the ongoing circulation of misinformation, exhaustion, substance abuse, potential for altercations amongst counter-protesters and with law enforcement, and the influence of ideologically motivated actors or charismatic speakers. On February 2, news reports indicated that the Ottawa Police are considering all options to address the situation, including potentially calling in the military to end the protest.¹¹ Enforcement measures to remove protesters raise the potential for escalated confrontations.

The presence of counter-protesters is becoming a concern, and there have been sporadic instances identified on social media where individual counter-protesters have confronted convoy protesters. Narratives opposing the protest in Ottawa are growing due to the ongoing disruption it is causing to daily life, local businesses and residents exposed to incessant noise at all hours and allegations of harassment from convoy protesters.¹²

The above noted factors may impact the temperature of the crowd and the potential for violence by a lone actor or fringe group cannot be discounted. As with all large public order events, these factors may have the potential to galvanize larger portions of the protesters to violence. The IMCIT assesses that opposition to vaccine mandates continues to grow in intensity and could become a potential flash point for acts of violence.¹³

An MPP recently posted content online showing two photos, for example - one with artillery and one with gas cans, both with writing on them and the caption, "LET. FREEDOM. RING."¹⁴ In a subsequent tweet, the MPP writes, "We are regaining our freedom using gerry cans of diesel refueling rigs-not dropping bombs, as was done in the past . A much more civilized manner in my humble opinion."¹⁵



^a Previously, it was reported that \$1 million was released to the organizer by GoFundMe <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/gofundme-money-released-convoy-1.6328029>

The original tweet has since been deleted, however, images of the artillery and gas cans absent the content in the subsequent tweet have been reposted by ideologically motivated individuals who have had images of weapons and violent narratives on their social media in the past.^{16 17} A screenshot of the original tweet which was deleted¹⁸ is provided below:



In addition to three arrests,¹⁹ multiple traffic tickets, as well as other demonstration-related traffic enforcement charges, have been laid by police.²⁰ As of February 2, the costs of policing the multi-day protest have surpassed \$3 million²¹ and 25 active investigations have been initiated.²²

Overall sentiment towards law enforcement remains mixed. Positive police comments on popular social media pages associated with the convoy are likely an effort to counter media reports and contribute to narratives that the police are supportive of this protest, which may be an effort to attract more supporters. Increased enforcement by police is likely to result in an uptick in hostile rhetoric within anti-public health order networks. Misinformation and accusations of false flag operations with anti-government and anti-police narratives continue to circulate with respect to events in Ottawa²³ and enforcement carried out at the Coutts border crossing in Alberta (AB).²⁴ In addition, negative law enforcement comments have been observed from members of the public who oppose the ongoing protest and perceive inaction by police.

NATIONWIDE SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Canada-wide solidarity actions have occurred simultaneously with the demonstration in Ottawa and more are being planned for this coming weekend, some of which may affect Canada-US border operations. As the situation in Ottawa is receiving widespread coverage, actions in Ottawa may continue to influence impromptu events in other Canadian provinces.

Solidarity actions have been identified in every province and enforcement at any one event will likely be perceived negatively and may spark more solidarity activities or adverse behaviour elsewhere. Reporting from RCMP Divisions indicate that local protests have so far remained peaceful and are expected to continue on weekends to maximize attendance numbers. Sentiments observed by Divisions at local solidarity actions include frustration towards governments for implementing ongoing public health restrictions affecting daily life and businesses, some internal tension over whether supporters should join the convoy in Ottawa or continue to protest locally, and potential for conflict with the general public who may perceive the protests as a nuisance. Within anti-public health order networks, recent Canadian news reports indicating that Quebec will not proceed with a proposed tax on the

Page 4 of 7

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unvaccinated²⁵ are being used to reinforce narratives that pressuring the government through protest activity is working.

The following are other notable actions and issues related to the Freedom Convoy:

- Protesters using tractor trailers, passenger vehicles, and farming vehicles blockaded the Coutts AB port of entry starting January 29, with some reports of protesters using force to breach police barricades.²⁶ Highway lanes to the border reopened on February 2 following negotiations between protesters and police²⁷, however, a new blockade was set up by protesters at another section of the highway which continues to affect traffic at the border.²⁸
- Discussions in anti-public health groups have advocated for supporters of the truckers' convoys to protest at other ports of entry across the country, including at Emerson, Manitoba (MB)²⁹ and Osoyoos, British Columbia (BC).³⁰
- A "slow roll call out" for fishers who oppose vaccine mandates is also being promoted for February 4 at local marine ports across Canada³¹, which may affect commercial fishing or ferry operations.
- Local solidarity convoys converging at provincial legislature buildings are also being planned for this weekend in Victoria BC³², Edmonton AB³³, Regina Saskatchewan (SK)³⁴, Winnipeg MB³⁵, Toronto Ontario (ON),³⁶ Quebec City, Quebec (QC)³⁷, Fredericton New Brunswick (NB)³⁸, and St John's Newfoundland (NL).³⁹
- Open source reporting indicates local solidarity actions including "slow roll" convoys that could affect traffic are also planned for this weekend in cities across Canada including in BC⁴⁰, Whitehorse, Yukon Territories (YT)⁴¹, AB⁴², ON⁴³, Halifax Nova Scotia (NS)⁴⁴, Moncton NB⁴⁵, and Charlottetown Prince Edwards Islands (PEI)⁴⁶.

Impromptu solidarity events are also likely to occur as the weekend approaches. As anti-public health order events Canada-wide continue to occur regularly and include tactics that are disruptive to daily life of local residents, it is likely that some of these solidarity actions will be met with counter-protests.

Based on national events from the past week, the use of convoys as a protest tactic is trending on social media. The use of vehicles in general for demonstrations poses multiple issues to public and officer safety, such as:

- Traffic interruptions that cause disruption to the daily lives of citizens and increase the potential for altercations with the public.
- Threat of weaponization of vehicles.
- Vehicles provide the opportunity to conceal materials which can be dangerous in nature.
- The demobilization of multiple vehicles requires specific operational consideration.

Page 5 of 7

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GLOBAL SOLIDARITY ACTIONS

Truck convoy protests in Canada have also attracted international attention and solidarity.

- American public figures with large audiences, including former President Donald TRUMP⁴⁷, businessman Elon MUSK⁴⁸, and talk show host Tucker CARLSON⁴⁹, have spoken in support of the convoy. Solidarity demonstrations in the US have been held along the border, including at the Detroit-Windsor Bridge⁵⁰ and along the Montana/Alberta border.⁵¹ A Facebook page called “Convoy to DC 2022”, which promoted a similar cross-country convoy for March 2022 to converge in Washington, D.C., reached approximately 100,000 members before the page was suspended.⁵²
- Anti-public health order demonstrators in Australia, who have been engaged in sporadic volatile protests since mid-January 2022, also held a “Convoy to Canberra” rally with reference to events in Canada.⁵³
- The IMCIT has observed social media postings expressing interest in holding similar rallies in cities around the world including in Belgium⁵⁴ and the UK.⁵⁵ While there is no reliable information on whether these events will materialize, the perception that they are influencing events globally is energizing Canadian protesters based on sentiments shared in popular convoy social media pages.

The IMCIT is liaising with law enforcement partners to maintain visibility on events related to the opposition of trucker vaccine mandates which are occurring nationally, and will provide updates as required.

Issued by: Ideologically Motivated Criminal Intelligence Team (IMCIT)

Approved by: Director, Directorate of Strategic Intelligence, Federal Policing National Intelligence

¹ RCMP Sit Rep #64: Freedom Convoy 2022- National Capital Region 2022-01-28-2022-02-01

² <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/ottawa-police-city-lawyers-considering-court-order-to-end-convoy-protests-1.5764263>

³ RCMP PIU 2022-74888_UPDATE #64_Canada Unity Freedom Convoy 2022_2022-02-02

⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/755658988740135/posts/756177442021623/>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/322864079775435/posts/323515443043632/>

⁶ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1288479498230682/>

⁷ <https://t.me/OttawaFreedomCollective/602>

Personal Info.

⁹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/calgary/airport-disruptions-planned-calgary-national-1.6240440>

¹⁰ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/trucker-convoy-gofundme-suspended-after-reaching-10-1-million-1.5765794>

¹¹ <https://www.cp24.com/news/all-options-on-the-table-to-end-protest-ensnaring-ottawa-says-police-chief-1.5765013>

¹² <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/truck-convoy-downtown-ottawa-residents-mental-health-1.6333674>

¹³ IMCIT NTL #2021-07 -- 2021-12-23

¹⁴ <https://twitter.com/randyhillier/status/1488994525469106182/photo/2>

¹⁵ <https://twitter.com/randyhillier/status/1489060753294430211>

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¹⁷ https://www.instagram.com/stories/_sons.of.liberty/2765148784600321693/

¹⁸ <https://mobile.twitter.com/randyhillier/status/1489060753294430211>

¹⁹ <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?newsId=f915d2c2-0ca0-4258-b821-837fb901be04>

²⁰ <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?newsId=3eae7a92-fdab-4477-9625-e40cf0823eba>

²¹ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/truck-convoy-police-solution-1.6337051>

²² <https://www.ottawapolice.ca/Modules/News/index.aspx?newsId=a1826997-05c5-4f86-83de-467cd3dcdb35>

- ²³ <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZfDDSua7p/>
- ²⁴ <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/vax-tax-nixed-1.6334828>
- ²⁵ <https://lethbridgeherald.com/news/lethbridge-news/2022/02/02/tensions-mount-as-ramp-move-in-on-coutts-blockade-on-tuesday/>
- ²⁶ <https://globalnews.ca/news/8588404/coutts-border-protest-alberta-wide-blockades/>
- ²⁷ <https://www.ctvnews.ca/canada/partial-reopening-of-alberta-border-crossing-hits-snags-1.5765919>
- ²⁸ https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=114429767813280&id=103484238907833 ;
- ²⁹ <https://www.agweek.com/news/vaccine-mandate-protests-disrupt-truck-traffic-at-us-canada-border>
- ³⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/groups/683613112631511/permalink/689027892090033>
- ³¹ https://www.facebook.com/events/448065080348107?context=%7B%22event_action_history%22%3A%7B%22surface%22%3A%22group%22%7D%7D
- ³² <https://www.facebook.com/groups/409787474271489/posts/419062156677354/> ;
- ³³ <https://www.victoriabuzz.com/2022/02/another-island-convoy-is-planned-for-vancouver-island-this-weekend/>
- ³⁴ <https://www.facebook.com/Alberta4Liberty/posts/136560562166960>
- ³⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/saskfreedomrally/posts/481881923548768> ; <https://regina.ctvnews.ca/duelling-public-health-measure-protests-expected-to-converge-on-sask-legislative-building-1.5765405>
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- ³⁷ <https://toronto.citynews.ca/2022/02/01/covid-truckers-protest-queens-park-ontario/>
- ³⁸ <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/major-construction-union-says-it-won-t-fund-covid-19-protest-convoy-in-quebec-city-1.5763218>
- ³⁹ https://www.facebook.com/events/265442822388135/?active_tab=discussion
- ⁴⁰ <https://www.facebook.com/events/484324756625399>
- ⁴¹ Tofino BC: <https://www.facebook.com/events/497567915101421?ref=newsfeed> ; Vancouver BC: https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=610297670010684&id=346160626424391
- ⁴² <https://yukonfreedom.com/events/>
- ⁴³ Calgary AB: https://www.facebook.com/events/659824191891049/?active_tab=discussion ; <https://calgaryherald.com/news/local-news/calgary-police-aware-of-potential-trucker-blockades-on-city-roadways-this-afternoon> ; Acheson AB: <https://www.facebook.com/events/1390467068076121/> ; La Crete AB: <https://www.facebook.com/photo?fbid=1365473327223563&set=gm.628334591796416>
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- ⁴⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/freedomnovascotia/posts/310087574496934>
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- ⁵⁰ <https://www.foxnews.com/transcript/tucker-trudeau-used-covid-to-short-circuit-democracy-in-canada>
- ⁵¹ <https://www.facebook.com/events/673128180381888/>
- ⁵² <https://www.ktvq.com/news/local-news/people-gather-on-montana-hi-line-to-support-freedom-convoy>
- ⁵³ <https://www.thetrucker.com/trucking-news/the-nation/movement-for-vaccine-mandate-protest-convoy-to-washington-d-c-gaining-steam-on-social-media> ; <https://www.dailydot.com/debug/facebook-suspends-trucker-protest-groups-qanon-gab-telegram-4chan/>
- ⁵⁴ <https://7news.com.au/news/canberra/ugly-scenes-as-police-move-in-on-freedom-protesters-illegally-camped-in-canberra--c-5538993>
- ⁵⁵ <https://www.brusselstimes.com/world-all-news/204546/world-freedom-convoy-eyes-brussels-as-destination-for-massive-trucker-protest>
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Page 7 of 7

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